

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0146-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC21349 and COC40644

PROJECT NAME: WAPA Structure Maintenance

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 3 N., R. 103 W.,
sec. 13, N½SE¼;
sec. 21, NE¼NE¼.

APPLICANT: Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The WAPA proposes to conduct maintenance activities around several transmission line structures on the Hayden-Vernal (HDN-VNL) and Bears Ears-Bonanza (BEA-BOZ) transmission lines located east of Dinosaur, Colorado. The planned maintenance, scheduled to begin in early August, includes removal of sagebrush around transmission line structures within the power line rights-of-way (ROW). The maintenance is necessary for fire fuel reduction as well as vehicle access to the structures for structure maintenance.

The HDN-VNL line is 138-kV with wood pole H-frame structures, and ROW COC21349 is 80 feet wide. The BEA-BOZ line is 345-kV with double-circuit lattice steel 100 feet tall structures, and ROW COC40644 is 150 feet wide. The structures where sagebrush removal will occur are: HDN-VNL 34/2 and 34/3, BEA-BOZ 74/5, 75/1, and 77/6. The two power lines are running parallel, sharing a portion of the utility ROW at all locations except BEA-BOZ 77/6. Sites 34/3 to 34/2 and the adjoining 74/5 to 75/1 are located at 40.229722, -108.899444, and site 77/6 is located at 40.221667, -108.955278.

Maintenance will use a rubber tired bobcat skidder fitted with a roller bar that will grind sagebrush and greasewood down to ground level. Access is by existing access roads along the transmission line ROW. The clearing will be a 25-foot radius around the wood pole structures and 50-foot radius around the steel lattice structures. There will be no vegetation clearing between poles along the ROW. The WAPA is currently preparing a CX that will be submitted to WRFO upon completion.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5-3, BLM 1601.08) the following plan:

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-49

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, E13: "*Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside of the right-of-way boundary.*"

The Proposed Action has been reviewed with the list of extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) described in the table below.

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
a) Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.		x
b) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		x
c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		x
d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		x
e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		x
f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		x
g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau of office.		x

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
h) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		x
i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		x
j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations		x
k) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		x
l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		x

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

The Proposed Action was presented to, and reviewed by, the White River Field Office interdisciplinary team on 7/5/2011. A complete list of resource specialists who participated in this review is available upon request from the White River Field Office. The table below lists resource specialists who provided additional remarks concerning cultural resources and special status species.

Name	Title	Resource	Date
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	7/27/2011
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	7/5/2011
Zoe Miller	Ecologist	Special Status Plant Species	7/8/2011

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Tower locations HDN-VLN 34/2 and 34/3 and BEA-BOZ 74/5 and 75/1: The referenced tower locations were within the project area inventoried prior to construction of the 345-kV power line (Lennon and Wheeler 1987 compliance dated 12/2/1987). Brush clearing within the 150 foot inventory area around the towers will not impact any known cultural resources and does not pose any known threat to potentially buried resources.

Tower location BEA-BOZ 77/6: The tower location was inventoried (Horn 1988 compliance dated 11/30/1988) for construction of the power line and identified only one historic site, 5RB 1949, in the vicinity of the power line construction area. The site was determined to be ineligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and no further work was required.

Brush clearing within the 150 foot wide inventory area will not impact any known register eligible sites and should not impact any potential subsurface resources.

Native American Religious Concerns: No Native American religious concerns are known in the area, and none have been noted by Northern Ute tribal authorities. Should recommended inventories or future consultations with Tribal authorities reveal the existence of such sensitive properties, appropriate mitigation and/or protection measures may be undertaken.

Special Status Wildlife Species: This brief project is scheduled to begin after mid-July when virtually all primary nesting by migratory birds has concluded at these elevations. These few diminutive brush-beating applications would have no reasonable likelihood of influencing habitat utility or suitability for special status species that may (but are not known to) occur at the project sites, including white-tailed prairie dog, reintroduced black-footed ferret (experimental non-essential population), burrowing owl, and (wintering) greater sage-grouse.

Special Status Plant Species: There are no anticipated impacts on special status plant species.

REFERENCES CITED:

Horn, Jonathan C.

- 1988 Supplemental Cultural Resource Inventory of 6.9 Miles of Proposed Transmission Line right-Of-Way for the Craig-Bonanza 345 kV Transmission Line Project, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Montrose, Colorado. (88-83-04: SHPO # MC.E.R60)

Lennon, Thomas J., and Charles W. Wheeler

- 1987 The Craig-Bonanza 345 kV Transmission Line Project: A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory Along a Proposed Transmission Line in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Uinta County, Utah. Western Cultural Resource management, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. (87-19-03: SHPO# MC.E. R13)

MITIGATION: All applicable terms and conditions of the original right-of-way grants and any amendments will be carried forward and remain in full force and effect.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: On-going compliance inspections and monitoring will be conducted by the BLM White River Field Office staff during and after construction. Specific mitigation developed in this document will be followed. The holder will be notified of compliance related issues in writing, and depending on the nature of the issue(s), will be provided 30 days to resolve such issues.

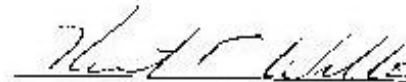
NAME OF PREPARER: Stacey Burke

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Heather Sauls

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, E13. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

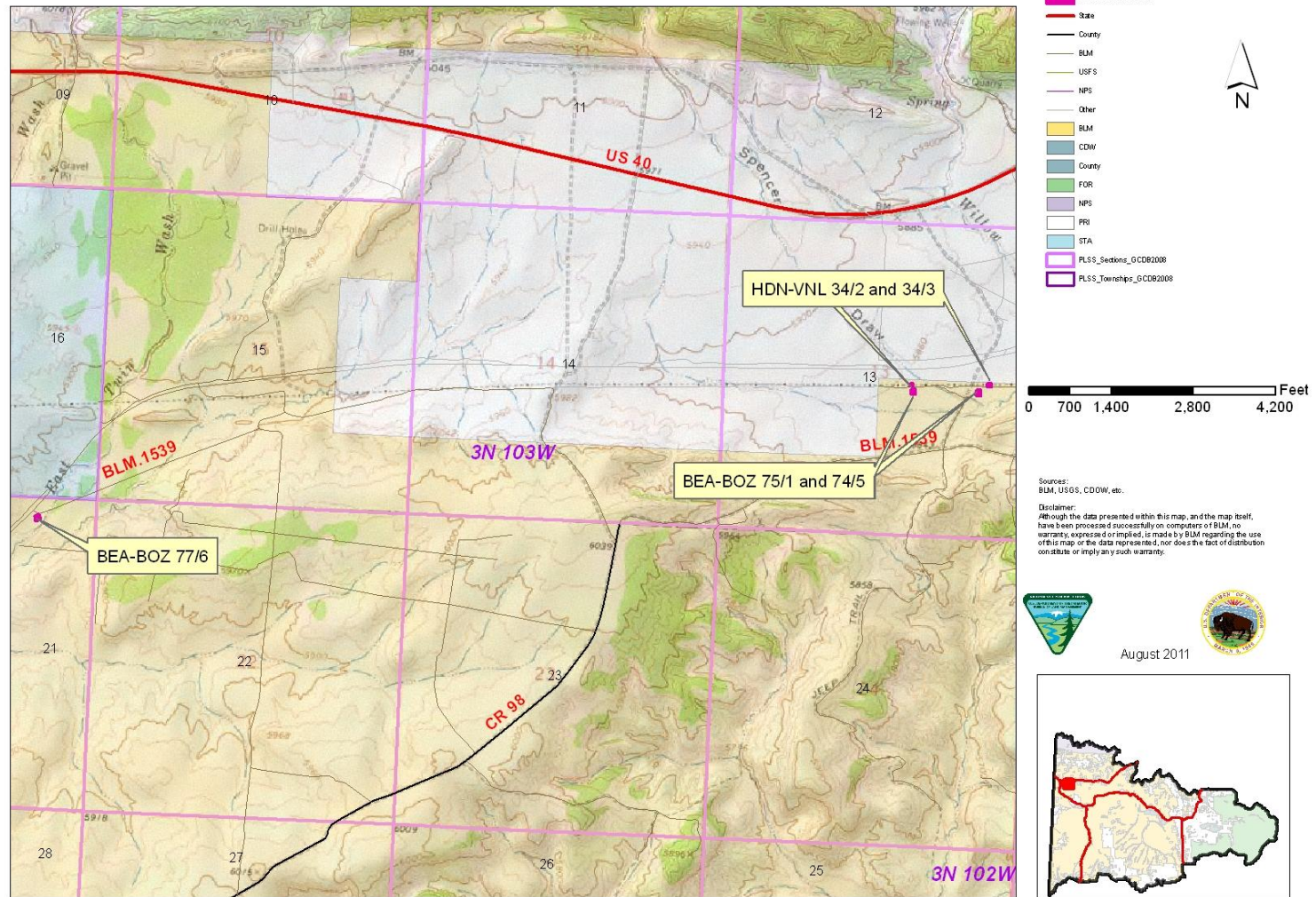

Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

08/05/2011

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A – Map of Proposed Action

WAPA Power Line Structure Sagebrush Removal Maintenance Work



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DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: WAPA Structure Maintenance

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0146-CX

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0146-CX, authorizing the maintenance of the power line structures within the power line rights-of-way.

Mitigation Measures

All applicable terms and conditions contained in the original right-of-way grants (COC21349 and COC40644) and any amendments shall be carried forward and remain in full force and effect.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM informed the public about this project by listing it on the online WRFO NEPA Register and a copy of the completed Categorical Exclusion will be posted on the WRFO website.

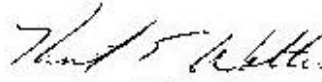
RATIONALE

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, E13. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

06/05/2011